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## ALLEGED PENTATEUCHAL ANACHRONISMS.

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Are actual anachronisms to be found in the Pentateuch? And if they may be found, do they prove its post-Mosaic origin? By anachronisms are meant errors in computing time. Are there errors in the Pentateuch confounding times, referring facts and events to wrong times? The affirmative position upon this question is taken by Wellhausen, who alleges certain anachronisms in these same writings that disprove their Mosaic authorship. And these anachronisms too he places in the very fore-front of his evidences for the later date of the Pentateuch, as though their weight were the most obvious and irresistible.

It is proposed to take up the chief of the passages said to contain these historical difficulties. If for *these* passages some possible solution can be found not inconsistent with the general integrity of the Pentateuch and its accredited origin, that, together with the presumption in favor of Moses, ought to answer the argument of the adverse critics, with reference to anachronisms. It ought not to be required that an absolutely certain explanation of a difficulty, so remote in time, so diverse in linguistic and political and social environment, should be given. Any reasonable, probable, or even possible explanation should be accepted, and so should leave the tradition of Moses' authorship undisturbed.

First of all, then, even, if nothing could be said in dissent from the allegation of each successive anachronism, the general supposition of a very respectful and conservative revision of the Pentateuch by an authorized, and duly accredited and inspired Scribe, as, for instance, Ezra, would remove every difficulty and solve every question. Assuming the fact of the divine inspiration in the origin of the Holy Scriptures, it is at

least not unreasonable to assume the divine inspiration in the revision of those Scriptures, and in their adaptation to the changed conditions of the people of God before the sacred Canon was finally closed. If there be a real anachronism in all the Pentateuch, it does not therefore necessarily place in doubt either the integrity or the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. To many minds it would confirm the tradition. The exception would prove the rule.

What then are the grounds for supposing this divinely authorized revision by Ezra?

1. Some intimations in the Book of Ezra itself. In the 7th chap. 6th verse it is said that "this Ezra was a ready scribe in the Law of Moses, which the Lord, the God of Israel had given" and that "the hand of the Lord his God was upon him;" in the 10th verse, that Ezra had set his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." If it was his business to give instruction in the law of Moses, which as we have seen was the Pentateuch, and as an inspired prophet to make oral comment upon it, not unreasonable would it appear that in transcribing, he should add the infrequent necessary gloss.

2. We have some ground for our supposition of an authorized annotation of the Pentateuch in the opinions of men between the periods of the closing of the Canon of the Old Testament and the opening of the New.

3. The early Christian fathers, in so far as their opinions have weight, confirm the supposition. The learned Bishop Cosin of the 17th century, in his "History of the Canon of Holy Scripture," writes that "it is generally received that after the return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon, all the Books of Scripture having been received by Ezra (then their priest and leader) . . . were by him, and the prophets of God that lived with him, consigned and delivered over to all posterity." His authorities were Jerome and Theodoret. Principal Cave in his *Inspiration of the Old Testament* cites passages also confirming this opinion from Tertullian, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Chrysostom, and says that "the evidence is conclusive, that in the early belief of the Christian Church, as well as in the tradition of the Jews, Ezra

restored, corrected and edited the entire Sacred records of his day, including the Law." Even, then, *if* anachronisms should be found, *as* the probable work of the authorized pen of Ezra, or as the possible product of some other inspired prophetic or priestly annotator, they would in no wise disprove the fact that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, but on the contrary would confirm the integrity of the work and his authorship. A striking confirmation of the view of Ezra's relation to the Pentateuch has lately appeared in Professor Willis J. Beecher's article on *The Law in the Times of Ezra and Nehemiah* in the December number of this Journal.

Let us turn to these seeming anachronisms and consider them one by one, until we have compassed all that are deemed most apparent and conclusive.

1. First of all is the one in Gen. 12:6 "And the Canaanite was then in the land." These words, it is held, imply that, at the date of writing, the Canaanite was not then in the land, and that therefore Genesis could not have been written until after the conquest of Canaan.

But do they necessarily imply the absence of the people whom Israel in great part displaced? Must the contrast be between the time when they were there and the time after they ceased to be there? May it not be between the time when they were there and the time before they came there? May it not be that the passage means that the Canaanite was then, even then, already in the land, when Abraham first came into it, 430 years before Israel possessed it, 430 years before Moses wrote these words, and that this brief statement was made as an explanation of the name by which he had just called the land, *Canaan*.

One fact in favor of this interpretation is that the Canaanites "were never entirely extirpated." The argument of the destructive critics proves too much. This is the view of as great a scholar as the German Kalisch. If we adopt this view, there is no anachronism here, and no reason found in this passage why Moses could not have written Genesis.

A second and equally probable interpretation of the passage, one, which is, indeed, entirely satisfactory and in harmony with the received authorship of the Pentateuch, makes

its significance depend upon the promise of the next verse, that God would give this land to Abraham's seed, and places the contrast, between the time of Abraham's coming and that of Moses' writing, whenever that was. "Is not the statement a mere statement of fact without ulterior or prior reference of any kind?" God appeared to Abraham and, notwithstanding the fact that the Canaanite then inhabited the land, promised the same Canaanitish land to his seed. Moses was seeking to secure the fulfillment of this promise. He expected, as Abraham did, that Canaan would bow the neck to Israel. Their presence did not make void the promise. It was not that the people needed to be informed of the *fact* that the Canaanites were there when God made the promise and Abraham believed it. For that they knew before. That had already been told them. (Gen. 10:18). But they did need to know the significance of the fact. Hence the repetition of it as illustrating the faith of Abraham, who there and then built an altar to God on the strength of his promise, and, to that degree, took possession of that land in his name. Dillmann adopts this interpretation, which, if we also adopt, like the other, precludes the charge of anachronism from that foremost of the disputed passages, and leaves no evidence for the later authorship of the Pentateuch here.

2. The consideration of the second apparent anachronism seems to strengthen this interpretation of the first passage. For it is like it, and in the very next chapter the 13th, verse 7, and with the same repetition: "And the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land." Why this third and immediate repetition? To communicate a fact by this time, certainly well known, or to point an argument? Let us look at the circumstances: "There was a strife between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle. And the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land. And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen." Now it is claimed that this statement could not have been written until after these hostile tribes had ceased to be in the promised land, and, accordingly, not until long after Moses received the kiss of the Almighty and his

body was borne by the unnamed messengers to its unknown sepulchre. But what possible reason can be imagined, on the supposition of a late date of this narration, for foisting upon it such an historical statement as this, when the statement had been made twice before within a brief space? If it is answered:—"To emphasize the danger of a quarrel between friends in the presence of enemies," then, certainly, no less cogent is the same reason from the pen of Moses, and much more probable for they were there still, at the time of his writing. And they were not there, in at all threatening force, at the time of the supposed later writing. Accordingly another anachronism vanishes and another passage proves inconclusive.

3. The third anachronism most frequently alleged is in Gen. 36:31:—"And these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom before there reigned any king over the children of Israel." Welhausen affirms boldly and without any qualification that "These words point to an author who wrote under the Hebrew monarchy," that is after the days of Saul. But certain counter questions arise:—

(1) How does it happen that every one of this entire list of Edomite kings lived before the expiration of the age of Moses? If any one of them can be shown to belong to a later time than Moses, the argument would be conclusive. But it has not yet been so shown.

(2) May not these words, instead of springing out of a later knowledge of actual Israelitish kings, have sprung out of Moses' own inspired prophetic consciousness, with reference to his own repeated promises of future kings of the people of God? Upon this interpretation there is no anachronism in this passage.

(3) But another question arises as to the meaning of the word *king* in this passage. The conventional statement with us is that Saul was the first king of Israel. But was he the first king of Israel in the biblical terminology? The writer of Deuteronomy (33:4, 5) says that "Moses commanded us a law; an inheritance for the assembly of Jacob. And he was *king* in Jeshurun." That *Jeshurun* was *Israel*, I find no question and no difference of opinion. "The Targum and

Peshitto Syriac uniformly render Jeshurun by "Israel." (Bib. Dic.) If, then, Moses is the author of Deuteronomy, he calls himself *king*. This use of the word *king* being established in the idiom of the language, as many passages show, the meaning of the passage under question becomes clear, and the anachronism disappears. Moses was first king of Israel. The line of Edomite kings enumerated after Gen. 36:31, were all anterior to Moses. "These are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel." Neither therefore is this an anachronism. Moses may as well have written it as Ezra or any man later than Moses.

4. Gen. 23:2, is another supposed anachronism:—"Sarah died in Kiriath-arba; (the same is Hebron) in the land of Canaan." Gen. 13:18;—"Abram moved his tent, and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron." In the Book of Joshua 14:15; it is said that "the name of Hebron beforetime was Kiriath-arba," and in 15:13, that Joshua gave to Caleb "Kiriath-arba, which Arba was the father of Anak, (the same is Hebron)." (Revised version).

The contention is made, That since neither in that time of Abraham, nor in that of Moses, was the name of Hebron known, here is positive evidence of a post-Mosaic author. But it is fairly questionable whether even here such claim is necessarily admitted. During these periods of Abraham and Moses the city aforesaid was commonly known as Kiriath-arba, the Kiriath of Arba "in consequence of its being under the authority, or the residence of Arba, Anak's father," (Horne's Intro.) But it is also certain from Num. 13:22 that the writer of this book was not ill-informed about this same Hebron. Now is it not possible that it bore both names all the time? Is it not possible that its first name was Hebron, and that after it came under the influence of Arba it was called Kiriath, and that at the last the original name of Hebron was restored by the people of Israel? Nor is this without parallel. Zion was evidently the original name of the city of Jebus in ancient time. When David subdued it, then it became "the City of David," and bore this name for centuries, after its illustrious captor. In Christ's time, the old name re-

turned, and "City of David" was relegated to Bethlehem. It is possible then in this case that the writer of the Pentateuch knew both names and bracketed his own Hebron.

5. The use of the name "Dan" in Gen. 14:14, is also alleged to be an anachronism on the ground that it is here said that "when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants born in his own home three hundred and eighteen, and pursued" Chedorlaomer and the confederate kings "unto Dan." In Judg. 18:29, it is said that the Danites "called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born unto Israel: howbeit the name of the city was Laish at the first." Now if the Dan of Abraham is really the same as the Dan of the Judges and Joshua, this looks at first glance; as if a later hand must have written it. But (1) who can say that the change from Laish or Leshem to Dan did not occur before, or in, Abraham's time, and that both names adhering more or less doubtfully to the same place down to the actual possession of the Danites, they, then, in honor of their father fixed finally his name upon it? Upon this supposition there is no anachronism.

And (2) however, it seems very doubtful whether after all there were not two Dans. What is there really to identify these two places? To distinguish them are these facts. (a) In time, they are in round numbers five centuries apart, which of course is not decisive in itself, though the name Dan is said to have been given to the Israelitish Dan only after the expiration of this period. (b) This tribal, patronymic Dan does not correspond in site to that of the Dan of Abraham. Abraham pursued the allied, but routed kings who came from the regions of Shinar and Elam away to the east and north of Damascus in the vicinity of the great rivers, "unto Dan." But the patronymic Dan was not located on either of the great thoroughfares "which the retiring forces would have taken on their homeward march."

(3) Besides the record shows that from this point Abram divided his forces and "pursued them and smote them unto Hobah which is on the left of Damascus," whereas, if he had followed them to the patronymic Dan "as far north as the

sources of the Jordan in the valley of Beth-rehob" their most direct course would have been through this valley by Hamath, and not in the direction of Damascus, out of their way toward the East.

(4) Deut. 34:1 indicates a Dan in the very region through which their natural retreat would have taken them, viz., in Gilead:—"Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the Lord showed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan." And 2 Sam. 24:6, confirms the suggestion:—"Then they came to Gilead, and to the land of Tahtim-hodshi; and they came to Dan-jaan." This Dan in the northern part of Perea, southwest of Damascus, Keil identifies with the Abrahamic Dan. If these things be so, neither is this passage an anachronism, nor is there any thing here to indicate that Moses could not have written the Pentateuch.

6. The account of Moses' burial at the close of Deuteronomy must have been of course by another hand than his own. Instead of this fact being an evidence of a later origin of the whole work, when taken in connection with Deut. 31:26, it seems to confirm the authorship of Moses. For there Moses formally commits his work, "this book of the law," to responsible custodians. Nothing can be more natural to suppose than that by these trusted men was finished the pages left blank where, from the pressure of affairs in those closing days, the commander of the wilderness journeys and the author of the law laid down his pen to begin his trembling but exultant ascent of Nebo.

It is therefore to be concluded that while a respectful reverent revision of the Pentateuch by a very probable divinely authorized scribe would in no wise discount the integrity or the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, upon a careful examination of the leading alleged anachronisms, no such revision is discernible, and real anachronisms are not found. Moses' authorship of the Pentateuch is not disproved by the discovery of errors in reference to times.